



ATF News

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Houston Field Division**

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ATF'S NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO HOUSTON WAREHOUSE FIRE

HOUSTON – The National Response Team (NRT) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and ATF special agents from the Houston Field Division have been activated to assist the Houston Fire Department in the investigation of a large commercial fire at Superior Packaging and Distributing Co. in Houston. This is a joint investigation between the Houston Fire Department and ATF.

Donnie Carter, Special Agent in Charge of ATF in Houston, said that damage to the warehouse, at 7707 Wallisville Road, is estimated at more than \$1 million. "The scene has been declared a hazardous materials environment and investigators will need to take special precautions," he said. "The ATF NRT is being brought in to assist because of the difficulties presented when investigating a fire of this size and to the specialties of the team members."

ATF developed the NRT in 1978 to assist federal, state, and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant arson and explosives incidents. The NRT consists of four teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement / fire service personnel in onsite investigations.

In addition to investigating hundreds of large fire scenes, the NRT has also been activated to scenes such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing and the Sept. 11, 2001, Pentagon crash site, as well as explosions at explosives and ammunition manufacturing plants, legal fireworks factories and illegal explosive device manufacturing operations.

Each team is composed of veteran special agents who have post-blast and fire origin-and-cause expertise; forensic chemists; explosives enforcement officers; fire protection engineers; accelerant detection canines; explosives detection canines; and intelligence, computer forensic and audit support.

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The teams work alongside state and local officers in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the bombing/arson.

Further complementing the team's efforts are technical, legal, and intelligence advisers. Moreover, a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles strategically located throughout the United States is available to provide logistical support.

The NRT will be on the scene of the fire beginning April 20. This will be the NRT's 596th activation since the inception of the NRT in 1978.

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